

NEWS RELEASE



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Illinois Officials Stress Need for Safety with Transportation of Chemicals *Safety Procedures for Farmers and Safe Driving Highlighted*

SPRINGFIELD – Following a significant anhydrous ammonia release in Lake County last week, Illinois officials are stressing the need for safety when transporting chemicals and for motorists driving near such vehicles. Local officials reported more than 30 patients were transported to local hospitals following an incident involving a tractor hauling anhydrous ammonia in Beach Park. A shelter in place order was given to the residents within a one-mile radius of the incident.

Potentially hazardous materials are transported daily on Illinois highways and roads and spring and fall see an increase in traffic as farmers work to apply fertilizer to their fields. The Illinois Department of Agriculture and the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association produced an [Anhydrous Ammonia Safety Video](#) outlining proper safety procedures that farmers should take when handling these products. In addition, drivers are asked to use caution, especially when driving near such vehicles.

"This time of year, when farmers are traveling from field to field, it is especially important to keep safety in mind and follow proper protocol when transporting anhydrous ammonia," said John Sullivan, Director, Illinois Department of Agriculture. "It is equally important that motorists be aware and take extra caution around Slow Moving Vehicles (SMV) and farm equipment that share our roads."

A hazardous materials (HazMat) accident can occur anywhere and at any time. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency is urging first responders and hazmat teams to make continuous training a priority. "The most expensive training, is no training at all," said Acting IEMA Director, Alicia Tate-Nadeau. "Through our partnership with the Illinois Fire Service Institute, various hazardous materials training programs are available to help train first responders on how to respond to, identify and properly mitigate hazardous materials." For counties that have Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), IEMA can provide grant funding that will help cover most of the cost for hazardous materials transportation planning, exercising the plans, and commodity flow studies.

Each year, Illinois officials respond to hundreds of hazardous materials incidents due to the release of oil, hazardous materials or other chemicals as the result of mishandling and traffic accidents. Each incident is responded to, investigated and action is taken to ensure any environmental contamination is removed. Illinois EPA representatives will be onsite to coordinate the environmental clean-up from this release.

“Illinois EPA’s Emergency Response staff have the training and expertise to ensure the responsible parties take the necessary steps to properly remediate impacts to our environment,” said Illinois EPA Acting Director John J. Kim. “Because these releases can happen at any time, residents are encouraged to take precautions, drive safely and contact local emergency officials if they have been involved in any release impacting the environment.”

If a chemical is improperly released, residents can be exposed through inhalation, skin/eye contact or ingestion. Individuals experiencing symptoms related to a chemical release should seek proper medical attention.

Anhydrous ammonia is a colorless gas with pungent, suffocating fumes that is often used as an agricultural fertilizer and industrial refrigerant. When handled improperly, anhydrous ammonia can be immediately dangerous. As liquid anhydrous ammonia is released from its container into the air, it expands rapidly, forming a large cloud that acts like a heavier-than-air gas for a period of time. Because the vapors hug the ground initially, the chances for humans to be exposed are greater than with other gases.

Symptoms of anhydrous ammonia exposure include:

- eye, nose, and throat irritation
- breathing difficulty, wheezing, or chest pain
- pulmonary edema, pink frothy sputum
- burns, blisters and frostbite.

The best first aid treatment for anhydrous ammonia exposure is to flush skin and eyes with water for at least 15 minutes and seek medical treatment for severe or unusual symptoms as soon as possible.

For more information about the dangers of anhydrous ammonia, visit www.dph.illinois.gov.

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